

THE SOUL

AND

ITS DIFFICULTIES:

A Word to the Anxious.

BY
HENRY WILLIAM SOLTAU,

AUTHOR OF
"THE HOLY VESSELS OF THE TABERNACLE;" "THE SCARLET LINE;"
ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE following pages have been written at the suggestion of a servant of Christ, who has found the need of a short and simple exposition of Scripture which he could put into the hands of those who are troubled by doubts and perplexities.

The usual difficulties presented to the minds of enquirers are stated, and attempted to be answered; but the writer is fully aware that the clearest declara-

tions of truth are utterly unavailing, unless God be pleased to make them effectual upon the soul by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit.



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“How can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?”

JOB xxv. 4.

THESE are questions of the utmost importance; for eternal happiness or eternal misery is involved in them. A mistake as to such momentous subjects will be terrible in its consequences. It cannot be rectified in another world. A boundless existence of unspeakable joy, or untold sorrow, stretches out before us; and all depends on this little span of life, during

which God gives us the opportunity to come to a true decision on these points. It will be wise, therefore, to give earnest attention to the solution of these questions, and to determine to make it the first object of our search.

§ 1. "*How can man be justified with God?*"

Observe, the question is not, How can I be justified in the judgment of *men*? or, How can I be righteous in my *own* estimation? but, How can I be justified with God? How can I attain to a righteousness that will satisfy God? the holy, the just, the glorious God,—who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,—who is Light, and in whom is no darkness at all,—who will by no means clear the guilty. Yea, the heavens are not clean in His

sight: He charged His angels with folly.

Again: the question is not, How can I attain a righteousness to fit me for *earth*? or to enable me to fulfil my duties *here*? but, How can I be righteous so as to dwell with God above? that HE may delight in me, and I in Him; so that there may be perfect, unbroken fellowship with Him for ever.

§ 2. "*How can he be clean that is born of a woman?*"

If I am *born* unclean, how can I ever become clean? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Why cannot the negro turn his black skin into white? For this simple reason: He is *born* black. His dark complexion is not the result of accident or of circumstances, but

is the stamp of his parentage. No possible change of circumstances, or of climate, can efface his blackness. So also as regards the leopard: the spots on his skin are birth-spots, and are therefore indelible.

Man's uncleanness, in like manner, is inherent in him, because of his birth. No effort of his own can alter him. He is born unclean. Unclean he must grow up, and unclean he must remain for ever, unless, through a mightier power than his own, a power of creation, he be "BORN AGAIN." The thorn or the thistle, if transplanted from the waste into the greenhouse, if pruned, manured, and watered, would be the thorn or thistle still. The one could bear no grapes, and the other no figs.

When David had, through care-

lessness and indolence, allowed himself to be tempted to open sin, whereby he dishonoured God, and brought down heavy chastisement on himself, he did not trace his sins to the circumstances in which he was placed, or excuse himself because of sudden temptation; but he turned his eye inward, and learned the natural depravity of his own heart,—a depravity that remained, even after he had believed in God: and he exclaimed, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” If such was *his* birth-condition, what is *ours*? How then can a man be clean that is born of a woman?

It will be attempted, by the help of God, in the following pages, to reply to these, and such like all-important questions, so that any who are really anxious concerning

their everlasting welfare may have doubts and difficulties solved or answered from the Word of God. In doing so, let us turn to some of the cases recorded in Scripture.

§ 3. “*What must I do to be saved?*”

ACTS xvi. 23–34.

Here we have the instance of a heathen jailor—a hardened man, inured to scenes of crime and blood, suddenly aroused to a sense of his lost state. The kindness of the Lord’s prisoners melted that stubborn heart, which no danger or death could terrify. The voice of pity, “Do thyself no harm,” seemed to him like a voice from heaven. It was a new sound in the jail; and suddenly his ruined state burst upon his conscience. The light of mercy discovered the darkness that was

within him, and he cast himself as a poor suppliant at the feet of his prisoners, exclaiming, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Is not this the first effect of conviction upon the soul; viz., to stir up the inquiry, What must I DO?

We naturally think that the sense of our own evil is a call for us to exert ourselves in some way or other, in order to deliver ourselves from it. In the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" there is also evidence that the soul confesses itself ignorant, and begins to take the place of a learner, instead of being satisfied with itself. At the same time, there is a remarkable contradiction in the very expression; for if I am to be *saved* by another, surely I have nothing to do myself. If, as a drowning man, I cry out for help, in order that one on

the bank may pull me out, then I am saved by the grasp of him who pulls me out of the water, and whose proffered aid I eagerly seize and welcome.

What then was Paul's answer to the jailor's cry? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It was an absolute declaration. "Believe, and *thou shalt be saved.*" The apostle did not direct the jailor to pray for salvation: for the cry of distress, "What must I do to be saved?" was, in reality, the only needful prayer. Neither did Paul tell him that, after much repentance and amendment of life, he might hope in the end to be saved; but he pointed him at once to salvation, present, ready, and immediate, as soon as the poor convicted sinner trusted in the SAVIOUR, the LORD JESUS

CHRIST. In fact, he was directed to commit his salvation altogether into the hands of another; viz., the LORD JESUS. And what was the result? The jailor, being an ignorant heathen, of course needed to have a little more instruction on this great subject, and especially respecting HIM whose name he had heard from the apostle's lips. So Paul and Silas "spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house;" and *that very night* he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. He had not to wait in uncertainty for days and weeks; it was not necessary for him to go hither or thither to hear many sermons or discourses; but he simply believed God; that is, he trusted in the SAVIOUR whom God had sent; he considered that God would not provide an insuffi-

cient Saviour, or One who had only done part of the work, and left the rest to be done by the sinner: but he believed that God had chosen His own Son, His own equal, to be the Saviour, in order that salvation might be complete and effectual. And thus he rejoiced in the assurance that ALL had been accomplished *for* him by another.

§ 4. *“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed.”* JOHN vi. 27.

A multitude had followed the blessed Lord over the lake of Tiberias to Capernaum, seeking to be fed again by Him with bread for the support of their bodies. And He thus enjoins on

them to seek earnestly the bread of *life*, instead of labouring only for the bread that perisheth. He tells them also, that the bread of life is a GIFT from the Son whom God had sealed for that very purpose, that He might *bestow* everlasting life on any one that desired it with as much earnestness as a man desires bread for his sustenance.

The Jews next asked Him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" And to this question the Lord replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

Here is the same truth, plainly put forth by Jesus Himself, which we have before been considering from the lips of His servant Paul. The same question, "What must I do?" is answered by the same

reply, "Believe on Him whom God hath sent." No obedience but *this* is commanded to sinners; no work but *this* is enjoined. Whoever trusts the Son of God, as the One sent of God to accomplish salvation, has worked the work of God, and has the work of God wrought in him. To work for the meat that perisheth not is the same thing as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is eating His flesh, and drinking His blood.

If I were hungry, and bread and meat were placed before me by a hospitable and kind-hearted friend, what should I do? Should I continue to beseech him to give me food? or should I ask him what work I could do, in order to have it? or should I with thankfulness take and eat it? Is not this somewhat of a parallel case

with us, as needy, hungry, thirsty sinners? Has not God *known* our need? Has He not *felt* for our need? And has He not therefore *provided* the bread of life, the flesh and blood of Christ, and placed it before us, and bidden us eat and drink unto life eternal? Ought I to continue to ask God for what He has already given—even His blessed Son, and salvation in Him? Ought I not rather at once, without further delay, to take Christ as my own salvation, my own redemption, my own righteousness, my own holiness, provided for me by God, because I am unrighteous, unholy, unsaved, and because I can attain none of these blessings by any efforts of my own?

But it may be asked, How am I to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ? What is the

meaning of this expression, used by the Lord himself? * If we read the whole passage down, from verses 47 to 58, there can be no difficulty as to the meaning of the Lord's words, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." In verse 47, He says, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." So that to believe is to eat and drink: for the result of believing is everlasting life; even as had been previously declared in John iii., that whosoever believeth on Him lifted up on the cross shall have everlasting life. So here, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life."

In fact, just as when we put bread or meat into our mouths and eat it we make it our own, and it becomes nourishment for

* John vi. 53.

the body, and part of our very existence; so, as soon as the sinner believes that Christ died for him, having suffered on the cross in his stead, that sinner immediately has everlasting life, *is saved*, and will be raised in glory by Jesus, when He shall come in the last day of the present age in which we live.

I may see bread and meat and wine on the table. I may be able to give the whole history of how the bread was made from corn grown in the earth, ground in the mill, &c., and how the wine has been made from grapes pressed, and the juice fermented; but, unless I eat and drink, of what advantage to me is the bread or the wine? How am I profited, as to my body, by the mere knowledge of the way in which these nourishers of life have been pre-

pared? So, I may know the doctrine about Christ's death, and I may have a true creed respecting Him; but, until I make that death *mine*; until I make that blessed Christ *my own*, by believing on Him as God's gift *for* me and *to* me; all my knowledge profits me nothing: I remain a perishing sinner still. Therefore, "Eat, O friends: drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Do not continue asking or praying for salvation; but take it, and praise God for it.

§ 5. "*Wilt thou be made whole?*"

JOHN v. 6.

There was a pool at Jerusalem, which occasionally possessed marvellous virtues; for an angel, at a certain season, went down into it and troubled the water; and if any one could step into the pool

immediately after the water was thus troubled, that person was healed of whatever disease he had. However excellent this cure, it could be obtained but by very few. The access to the pool itself was limited; for there were only five porches or entrances to it. The visit of the angel was but seldom; and only one person could gain the benefit; and he must be a strong man, and able to push his way through the multitude of sick folk who crowded the porches, and step down first into the pool, to secure the benefit of the healing virtue communicated by the angel to the troubled waters.

A poor helpless man had lain for many a long year near that pool. He had seen one after another step down into the water and come up healed, and go away

rejoicing. He had hoped that his turn might come, sooner or later; but those stronger than he stepped in before him, and no one would give him a helping hand; for each was intent on his own cure. Thus, in vain hope, which had made his heart sick, year after year had passed away; and so would he have continued to the end of his days, hoping on in vain, and perishing within sight of a blessing which he had no power to reach.

But Jesus passed by. He had, from the bosom of God in glory, looked down and pitied that poor impotent man. He had marked his useless struggles and efforts; and one object of His coming as the Son of man into this world was to heal and save that helpless sinner. The sight of his misery and fruitless attempts brought

God's blessed Son down from the Father's bosom into this groaning world. Jesus bent His steps towards the outside of those porches; and knowing that the impotent man had been now a long time, even thirty-eight years, in that case, He saith unto him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Reader! He says these words to thee: Wilt THOU be made whole? Wilt THOU be saved? How wilt thou reply? How did the impotent man answer this simple, gracious question? "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."

Was this, in truth, any answer to the Lord's question? Did Christ ask him about the pool? or, did He offer to help him into the pool? Did He ask him what

strength he had, or what help was to be had from others? Was not the Lord's question of an entirely different kind? "Wilt thou be *made whole*?" Do you desire to have the work of healing done *for* you by another, without any effort of your own?—without the help of man or angel? This was the real meaning of the question. The man had been hoping all his life that he might be able, though impotent, to reach by his own strength the healing waters at the happy moment. He had found every such effort useless; and now, when a plain offer was made him of an immediate and entire cure, he is unable to reply in a straightforward way; for he had so long been thinking of his own attempts, so long hoping that he should find himself a little stronger

the next time the angel came, that he was unable to trust in the entire power of another.

He ought to have learned, from thirty-eight years' experience of impotence, what it was to be really helpless. He ought to have known that a man does not get stronger by growing older. But he had learned neither of these lessons; and when addressed even by the Son of God, his mind was still occupied with *himself*.

And so it is at this present moment. The sinner, anxious for salvation, and in earnest for it, continues unable to answer the question, "Wilt thou be made whole? Wilt thou be saved?" "Yes, I am trying for it," is the usual reply; as if salvation depended on an effort made by the sinner.

The law of works stands in

very much the same relation to the sinner, as the pool of Bethesda did to the impotent man. One great object that God had in giving the law was, that man might know his total inability to fulfil it. It proposed to give life to any one that had power in himself to keep *all* its righteous demands; but any one that could have so done must have life eternal to begin with; and, therefore, would not have needed the law as a way of life. So the pool would give healing to any one that had strength and activity enough to reach it just after the angel's visit. It is clear that such a person would not need the pool as a cure for impotence; for he would not be impotent. Yet the man of thirty-eight years' helplessness had not learned this lesson; and the sinner still hopes

on, as day after day passes, and trusts that he shall be better fitted for salvation to-morrow, and shall be able more to commend himself to God, in order to be saved; forgetting that every day adds to the amount of his sins, and that he is growing stronger in evil as age increases. He began his existence here a ruined sinner; and every hour of his subsequent life has *added* trespass, transgression, and iniquity to his original evil. How, then, can he expect to improve, or to render himself in any way more approved by God? What should he do? Confess his own unworthiness and helplessness: struggle no more, but trust in the Almighty Saviour whom God has provided.

A fourfold description of man's condition is given us in Rom. v.:

“without strength—ungodly—sinners—enemies.” Every one that is saved must come up to this full description of evil; and any attempt on our part to raise ourselves out of this fourfold state of condemnation, is an attempt to rob God of His great glory; viz., the power to justify. We have to believe in a God who justifies the *ungodly*; who commends His love to us, in giving Christ to die for us, while we were still *in our sins*, and not one jot improved; and who reconciles *enemies* to Himself by the death of His Son.

As soon as any one, in his ungodliness, believes in God as justifying the ungodly, God reckons to that man his faith as righteousness: and God cleanses that man from all sin, through the precious blood of His own Son.

Thus, in Psalm xxxii., we read: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." And this description of the blessedness of the man who is pardoned and forgiven is quoted in Romans iv., to prove how blessed the man is whom God reckons to be righteous without any works; God reckoning to him his faith for righteousness.

We may look at justification in four ways—

First: A person is justified by God immediately on his believing in Christ. His faith is reckoned for righteousness.

Secondly: A person is justified by the blood of Christ,—“being

justified by His blood.”* For Christ was delivered because of our offences, and in His death answered to God for them, bearing all the condemnation due to them; and He was raised again, because of the complete justification which was accomplished for sinners by His death.

Thirdly: A person is justified, or made righteous, by the obedience of Christ; that is, by His obedience in death. As it was one act of disobedience that ruined us, so is it this one act of obedience that justifies us.

Fourthly: A person is justified *in* Christ. He is made the righteousness of God in Him; that is, he is made righteous enough for God’s own presence, and for God’s own glory being raised to the perfect standard of God’s require-

* Romans v. 9.

ments; so that HE may be satisfied, and take delight in the saved sinner, in union with Christ risen. Christ is the righteousness of the redeemed.

Now, all these four aspects of justification are combined in the salvation of every guilty sinner, who, without any works of his own, trusts simply and wholly in the Lord Jesus. And this affords the answer to the first question, How can man be justified with God?

§ 6. *“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”* MATT. viii. 22.

This was a leper's cry, whose very disease made him conscious of his ruined condition, and who knew that, without the immediate power of God, he was hopelessly unclean. Leprosy stands forth in the Word of God as a type of

the utter filthiness of the flesh; that is, the desperate corruption of the human heart. It was a disease which worked with fearful malignity deep beneath the skin, turning comeliness into corruption; and as soon as it was discerned, the infected sufferer was cast forth without the camp or the city where he dwelt, and had to wander, a hopeless outcast, far away from the society of man, and far off from the place where God was known, and sought in sacrifice and worship. His garments also must be rent, and his upper lip bound with a covering; and no utterance was to proceed from him beyond the mournful cry, "Unclean."

This is a shadow of the *real* state of the sinner. He is *unfit* for fellowship with man; for he will, by intercourse, only con-

taminate others. He is *far off* from God, and can neither worship, nor serve, nor please Him; for uncleanness pervades everything that he does and thinks. In such a state, his best cry is the cry of the leper, "Unclean! Unclean!"

It was this ruined condition of man which brought the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, down in mercy to the shame and suffering of the Cross. The words uttered by the man full of leprosy, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," proved his consciousness of Christ's power, though he hesitated as to Christ's will. Surely it would have been less evil in the man to have doubted the power than the love of Christ. Yet still the very *if* that he uttered, expressing his doubt of Christ's compassion, compelled the Lord,

as it were, to vindicate His own heart of pity and of mercy, so that He immediately answered, "I will; be thou clean:" and forthwith the leper was cleansed. Now, is it not a common question of the heart, "Will God have compassion on *me*?" His almighty power to save is not doubted. But, "has He the love and compassion for me which will induce Him to *save me*?"

Let me ask my reader, Which is the greater offence, to question a person's ability? or, to question his kindness? Supposing one were to prefer a petition to a sovereign, and express on that petition this sentiment: "I do not doubt your power to relieve me; but I altogether mistrust your pity and your kindness." With such a petition, would he be likely to succeed with man?

And yet, *such* was the leper's cry to Christ. Still, Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight of his misery; a compassion which was in His heart, entirely independent of any cry of the leper: for if that petition could in any way have influenced the Lord Jesus, it would rather have repressed His heart of love than stirred it up. So, doubt no more the will of God to save. No longer cast such a reflection on His wondrous love.

The proof of His willingness is the fact of His having given His own Son to die. This is God's universal proclamation of His readiness to save. When you meditate on Christ lifted up on the Cross, you are contemplating the one great evidence that God has given of His wondrous love for the ruined sinner. In the

death of Jesus there is mercy proclaimed, wide and far, to any one who wishes for it. You may at once, without delay, accept it. You may believe that God's mercy is even now towards you; for He has declared it, in not sparing His own Son.

But it may be asked, *How* is a sinner cleansed? It will be needful, in answering this question, to state one or two common mistakes on this subject. There is a prevailing thought that salvation is a gradual amendment, a process of sanctification; so that, little by little, the once lost sinner is made meet for heaven: and this gradual improvement is attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit cleansing the soul, and making it more and more pure and holy.

But this is a mistake, to which

evidently the Lord alludes, when speaking to Nicodemus;* for there He declares these simple and all-important truths—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." So that the flesh, or the corrupt nature, which we inherit from our parents, remains the same evil, unchanged thing to the end of our existence on earth. No power of God is put forth to alter, amend, or improve it: for "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be.*" It is like some wild, ferocious beast, which must be chained, but cannot be tamed; like the Leviathan, in speaking of which to Job the Lord says, "Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?"

* John iii.

No power can render the flesh subservient to the will of God. Neither is it to be trifled with; but it must be kept under, and brought into captivity, and watched against with incessant wakefulness, lest it break forth again and again with its unsubject evil. It is never turned into spirit. It is never really improved or amended in the sight of God. On the other hand, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. As soon as a sinner believes in the Lord Jesus, he has everlasting life. He becomes a new creature, *not* by the turning of the old into new, but by the power of God creating him anew in Christ Jesus, after His own image. He is born again. God is his Father. The flesh, called also "the old man," remains unchanged; and he will feel its presence and power

to the end of his sojourn below : but he may consider that he has put it off as an old garment, and that he has “put on the new man.” Though conscious of the presence of sin, he may reckon that the body of sin has been destroyed, and that he has died to sin in the death of the Lord Jesus on the Cross.

As soon as he believes, he is sanctified, or made holy, through the offering of the body of Christ. He is washed, sanctified, justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God. And that same offering of the body of Christ, by means of which he is sanctified, perfects him for ever ; so that at once he is made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, without any further process or progress.

He will, doubtless, become more

and more *practically* holy in his ways and walk here below, through the help and power of the Holy Spirit, constantly applying the word to his heart and conscience. But no attainment, however advanced in the ways of righteousness or holiness here, makes him fit for the glory of God; because his fitness for that glory was perfected as soon as he was delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

In proof of this, let the reader prayerfully meditate on these words of God: "By the which will (that is, of God) *we are sanctified*, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "By one offering He hath *perfected for ever* them that are sanctified."* "Know ye not that

* Heb. x. 10, 14.

the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but *ye are* washed, but *ye are* sanctified, but *ye are* justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Cor. vi. 9-11.

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; *who hath* delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom *we have* redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Col. i. 12-14.

Here then is the sufficient answer to the question, "How shall he be clean that is born of a woman?" He is clean every whit* as soon as he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ; for then he is born again; he is a new creature; he *has* forgiveness of sins; he *is* washed in the precious blood, and *is* made meet for the inheritance of the holy ones in the presence of God.

§ 8. *"What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?"* MATT. xxii. 42.

Salvation turns upon a right reply to this question. Peter was enabled so to answer a similar question, that the Lord Jesus replied to him, "Blessed art thou." Peter confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." What makes this question of such

* John xiii. 10.

great importance? In the first place it is, What *think ye* of Christ? It supposes that the heart has been occupied about Him, so that there has been some exercise of thought, some inward meditation respecting Him. Many *hear* of Him, but do not *think* of Him. Many listen to truths about Him, but do not make HIMSELF the subject of their thoughts.

Have you, my reader, occupied yourself for even a few minutes in meditating on this wondrous subject—the LORD JESUS CHRIST? You may have thought about your sins. You may still be troubled about your past life. You may be making resolutions as to the future. But have you given deep and anxious consideration to this great question, Whose SON is Christ?

Many a soul is kept in doubt

and anxiety, because it does not ponder over and weigh the answer to this all-important enquiry. Jesus is the Son of God,—the Son of the living God: and because He is, and ever was, the only-begotten of the Father—equal with Him—the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person,—because Jesus is, and ever was, the mighty God, the Creator of all things, the Sustainer of all things,—therefore it is that His death upon the cross is so efficacious, so complete and eternal an answer for sin,—of such infinite value to God. Therefore it is, also, that the love of God is proved to be so vast, so unspeakable, towards sinners, inasmuch as He did not spare His own Son; He did not hesitate to bruise His own Beloved, but delivered Him up to judgment,

wrath, and death, in order that He might spare, pardon, and redeem lost sinners.

It cost God His only Son to save one sinner. It cost Him His own heart's affections; for that blessed Son had been from everlasting in His bosom, and had in every thing delighted and pleased God: and yet He placed Him on the cross as a substitute for the sinner, dealt with Him under the curse, made Him to be sin, made His soul to be an offering for sin, laid on Him iniquity, and caused Him to bear the sin of many.

If the great, the mighty, the glorious JEHOVAH JESUS has come to suffer the penalty that I deserved, can I any longer question or doubt my eternal salvation? If all the wrath I ought to endure has been rolled on Him, shall I have to taste any of that wrath

myself? If He has paid my debt to the utmost in shedding His own precious blood for me, will God reckon that debt against me any more?

What would you think of a creditor demanding of his debtor payment a second time of a sum which had been already fully paid, and for which a receipt had been duly delivered? Such a creditor must either keep his books in a very negligent way, or must be unjust in his dealings. The death and resurrection of Christ is God's acknowledgment in full discharge of every sin of which the believer has been, is, or can be guilty. And so complete is that discharge, that God himself says, He is *faithful* and *just* to forgive. He even leaves out the word mercy, and places His forgiveness of sins upon His faith-

fulness and justice. And all this results from the greatness and glory of the Sacrifice, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;” no condemnation of any kind; no condemnation, because of the evil of one’s heart, the evil of one’s ways—sin within, or sin committed—transgressions, trespasses, or iniquity. There is *no* condemnation, for all condemnation has passed on the blessed Lord Jesus; for He was delivered for our offences. He His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree. He was made sin for us. He bare our iniquities. He was numbered with the transgressors. He died, the just instead of the unjust ones. By himself He purged our sins. In Him we have

redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Observe also the word *now*. "There is *now* no condemnation;" at this very time, at this very moment, without waiting or hoping for any future mercy. And *who* are *in* Christ Jesus? *All* who have eternal life, through faith in Him; *all* who from the heart confess that Jesus is the Son of God.

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

"He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

"The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true: and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

ANSWERS TO SOME COMMON DOUBTS
OR OBJECTIONS.

§ 8. (1.) "*How do I know that Christ died for me?*"

This question is best answered by proposing another question: Do you know that you are a sinner? It is one thing to *say*, We are all sinners, and quite another thing from the heart to acknowledge, *I* am a sinner. Have you to any extent realized the grievous burden of sin? Have you felt evil thoughts and corruptions rising up in your heart, and loathed them? Has your conscience been exercised respecting the guilt of your own soul, as well as the evil of your past life? and

have you hated sin, and desired to get rid of that evil—not so much from fear of judgment or of hell, as because of the dislike which you feel to sin itself, and because you know it shuts you out from God?

If you have really known and understood to some extent what it is to be a sinner, then may you truly say, Christ died for me; for listen to God's word: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* Here is a world-wide proclamation from God. He declares, *first*, that the proclamation is true, and that there is no uncertainty about it. It is a *faithful saying*. *Next*, that it is worth while for every one to accept His message, no matter

* 1 Tim. i. 15.

who it may be, or in what state the sinner may be. Let him receive the saying from God. Let him trust it. It is worthy of *all* acceptation. *Then* He proclaims the object for which Christ Jesus came into the world; viz., to save, to procure eternal redemption, to accomplish salvation. And *lastly*, the people are described whom He came to save, that is, *sinner*s.

Whoever, therefore, can truly write himself down a *sinner*, under this proclamation, may with confidence say, Christ Jesus came into the world to save *me*; for I come under the class of persons for whom He died.

Supposing that the Queen of this country were to provide a vast storehouse full of corn, and were to have a placard posted over the door of the storehouse to this effect: "This corn is pro-

vided for all the poor and needy, who have no money, and who have no hope of obtaining any, whereby they may obtain food for themselves." Any one reading such a proclamation might ask himself, "Have I any right to this corn? Surely I have, if I am in want." The only requirement demanded, in order to entitle any one to partake of the corn, would be abject poverty and need. If a person were too proud to own his penury, he would starve; but the more clearly an indigent person could prove his poverty, the more surely entitled would he be to the corn, and that upon the highest authority—the word of the Queen.

So is it with this blessed proclamation from God. You have only to plead your complete ruin; and your consciousness of that very ruin is, upon God's authority,

your title to say, Christ Jesus came into the world to save *me*. The apostle Paul himself realized the value of this faithful saying, and was resolved to put himself down in the list of those for whom Christ died. And so he concludes the sentence by declaring, "of whom I am chief."

If God had published a book, in which the names of all those for whom Christ died were entered, and if He had sent that book down into this world, it would have been perfectly useless; for the countless multitude of names therein enrolled would utterly prevent any one from discovering his own. No human hands could, through a life-time, turn over its pages; no life would be sufficiently long to peruse its contents. It is a countless multitude, which no man can number,

that have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The only wise God has therefore pursued the only wise plan, and has given us, in the Scripture above quoted, the description of those whom Christ came to save. Paul the apostle heads the list, as a pattern to those who should afterwards believe in Christ; and you may write your name down as *close* under that of Paul as you please. And if you can with truth thus enter your name in the list of sinners here below, be assured God is faithful: He cannot deny himself, and your name is entered in the Lamb's book of life above.

§ 9. (2.) "*I fear I am too great a sinner; I feel so wicked.*"

This sounds like a very humble confession; but, in truth, it is an

utterance of great pride, and it is in itself a very wicked thought. What would you say of a sick man who refused to have the advice of a very skilful physician, because he considered his own case as beyond the power of that physician's skill? Surely you would say, "That man thinks he knows more about his disease, although he has never studied medicine, than that learned physician, who has given his whole time and attention to it. He must be a foolish man; for, be his disease what it may, he is despising the only remedy that may possibly do him good.

In human things, men are not generally so foolish. The sick man will catch at the least ray of hope, and will eagerly desire any help that may be rendered him. Indeed, it is seldom that a person

likes to think or to hear that his case is hopeless; yet, in the great subject of salvation, the sinner rather cleaves to the thought that he is too bad to be saved. He undervalues thereby the precious blood of Christ, and says that the blood is not sufficiently precious. He ventures to question the deep and wondrous love of God to him, a sinner; or calls in question the foreknowledge and wisdom of God, by supposing that God has not provided for his case; but that his sins are so many, and so great, that they are beyond the reach of mercy; and that God has, therefore, miscalculated in His gift of Christ, and has not provided a sufficient sacrifice. It is clear, that if any one be too great a sinner to be saved, the apostle Paul is a liar, and the Word of God is false; for Paul

cannot be the *chief* of sinners, if there be a greater than he; and the word of God cannot be true, which has thus recorded his saying.

O reader! do not any longer thus presumptuously doubt the value of the precious blood of Christ. Do not question the marvellous wisdom and love of God, in giving His own Son to die. Hear His words: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

§ 10. (3.) "*I have not repented enough: I do not feel sorry enough for my sins.*"

As the word "repentance" is in very common use, and much misunderstood, it may be well here to search from the Scripture

what it really means. The Greek word, which we translate repentance, implies *change of mind*, and does not in *itself* convey the thought of sorrow. It is often used by the Lord Jesus himself to include the *whole* of salvation, as in Luke xiii. 3, and xv. 7-10.

This is very evident when, in explaining the parable of the lost sheep found by the shepherd, and that of the lost piece of money found by the woman, the Lord speaks of the joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth; although in the lost sheep and the piece of money there is clearly no sorrow manifested. In the concluding parable of the prodigal son, where he is described as passing through a certain process of soul, which *we* should call repentance, the Lord omits that word altogether, and says, "He

was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found," thus introducing the thought conveyed by the two former parables into the third ; for the sheep was lost and found, and the piece of money was a lifeless, unconscious thing.

The apostle Paul, also, when preaching at Athens, uses the word "repentance" in this general sense, as including faith : "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent."* The Athenians ought to change their minds as to God, and turn from idols and the unknown god, to the true and living God, who had given Christ.

Repentance is sometimes spoken of in connection with faith, as in Acts xx. 21, where Paul speaks of his having testified, "both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith

* Acts xvii. 30.

toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Jew needed to have a change of mind toward God as much as the heathen Greek. Both were alike ignorant of the love of God. The Jew thought that he must gain God’s favour by his works. The Greeks were worshipping false gods, and were also ignorant of the gracious character, and power, and wisdom, of the true God. So that Paul, in preaching the gospel, proclaimed to *both* the true and living God, manifested in all His grace and truth in the gift of His blessed Son Jesus Christ.

If repentance be viewed as sorrow for sin, which is the common, though not scriptural, thought of it (for in the Bible it includes much more), then we must be careful *not* to make a merit of this sorrow for sin, and *not* to

suppose that it is a part of salvation. It is true that the soul must experience some consciousness of the evil of sin, or otherwise there will be no turning to a Saviour.

A sick man would not send for a physician if he did not feel his sickness; his feeling his sickness is no cure, nor any step towards a cure; but he is compelled, by the consciousness of his own misery, to seek some remedy. So with respect to the feelings of the soul as regards sin. They are only so far requisite, because without them the sinner would not think of a Saviour. Were we to weep over and lament our condition all our lives, and were we to loathe ourselves a hundredfold more than we do, nothing would be gained by this; God would not pardon us because of our

conscious misery, nor would our tears blot out our sins.

Indeed, the knowledge of sin that a person has, when he is first converted, is generally very superficial. Peter had followed Christ for some time before he discovered his own ruined state, and then he exclaimed, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" His first impulse was to send Christ away, because he felt so *unfit* to be in His presence; but the Lord said, "Fear not." The very misery which the apostle experienced was occasioned by the presence of the Lord; and Christ's presence and help were the only cure for his misery.

The apostle Paul, after a long life of remarkable devotedness and zealous obedience, declares that he is "the chief of sinners:" not that he *was*, but that he *is*.

His soul had more and more grown in the knowledge of his own vileness, as he had more and more closely followed Christ.

No one has a right to say, I have not repented enough: I have not felt my sins enough. For no one has a right to define *how much* he ought to feel his sins. It should be, indeed, an increasing, deepening experience of the soul, as the believer walks more and more with God. Have you felt yourself *such* a sinner as to need a Saviour? If so, there is Christ for you. God has provided in His death the immediate and sufficient remedy for all sin, whether felt or not.

§ 11. (4.) “*I do not feel that I am saved.*”

This is a very common form of unbelief, and is much encouraged

by believers, who have peace and joy in Christ, asking the anxious about their feelings, instead of only directing them to trust in the Lord Jesus. Suppose that Moses, when he had lifted up the serpent of brass on the pole, had gone to the bitten Israelites, and asked them what they *felt*, instead of directing them to look at that brazen serpent, what would have been the result? They would have perished, and the lifting up of the serpent on the pole would have been of no avail.

In like manner, the convicted sinner is not to be asked, and ought not to ask himself, What do I *feel*? but he should turn his thoughts at once upon what God declares that Christ has done; viz., that He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that He has been lifted up on the Cross,

that whosoever believeth should not perish, but have eternal life.

If I owe a debt, and a friend pays it, and brings me the receipt, I do not *feel* that it is paid, but I *know* it is. I believe my friend's word, and I see the receipt. I am *sure* it is paid, because my friend would not deceive me, and would not forge a receipt; and this certainty in my soul that the debt is paid removes all that feeling of doubt and fear which before occupied me, and I am at rest, and am not afraid of being thrown into prison for my debt—I am not afraid of meeting my creditor: full payment has been made.

So, reader, turn your eye upon Christ on the Cross, and ask the question, Were my sins laid on Him there? Is His precious blood the payment in full for all my grievous debts to God? Do I

believe that His death is enough? that God is satisfied with that? and that nothing more is needed? If once you are assured that the Lord Jesus, God's blessed Son, was given by God himself, even unto death, in order that full payment and satisfaction might be made in that death for your innumerable sins, then you will have the feeling of rest and peace that you desire; for if you believe that all is settled in Christ's death, you cannot have a feeling of doubt or uncertainty. If the debt is paid, it is paid.

The reason why you do not feel the peace you would wish is, that you do not entirely believe the debt is paid. Trust God about it; and peace and rest are your portion. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." We are

not justified by *feeling*, but justified by faith; and being thus justified, or accounted righteous before God, because we believe in Christ, we cannot but have peace with God as the result.

§ 12. (5.) “*But I do not love God as I ought.*”

Let me ask you, reader, if there be any one here below who loves God as he *ought*? Is there any one who is self-satisfied as to the extent of his love for God? Does God expect us to love Him *before* He saves us? or, does He save us first, and then expect us to love Him *because* He has saved us? Does the little infant in the mother's arms love its mother first? and does the mother love it because of the infant's love for her? Does not the child grow up under the consciousness of the

love of its mother? And thus its own heart is drawn out in love towards one who has cherished, and nourished, and watched, and cared for it so much.

Some years ago two gentlemen were riding together, and as they were about to separate, one addressed the other thus: "Do you ever read your Bible?" "Yes; but I get no benefit from it, because, to tell you the truth, I feel I do not love God." "No more did I," replied the other, "but God loved me." This answer produced such an effect upon his friend, that, to use his own words, it was as if one had lifted him off the saddle into the skies. It opened up to his soul at once the great truth, that it is not how much I love God, but how much God loves me.

My love to God is as nothing.

It is not as large as a drop in comparison with the mighty ocean. God's love to me is vast, unbounded, measureless. The gift of His only begotten Son is the proof that He loves me, and how much He loves me. If I can tell the value of Christ—if I can estimate the mighty power, wisdom, beauty, love, and perfection of Him who is God's fellow, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person,—then I can say how much God loves me.

Cease, therefore, from doubting His love, because you find your own so meagre, and poor, and short; and if you desire to love Him more, contemplate more and more His love for you, by searching more and more into His unspeakable gift, His blessed Son; and then you will love Him,

because He has *first* loved you. A person sometimes says, "I am trying to love God." This is an entire mistake. Love will never spring up through effort. It must be kindled in the soul by the assurance of God's wondrous love to us, and by gazing on the beauty and loveliness of His blessed Son.

§ 13. (6.) "*But is it not presumptuous to say that we are saved before we die? How can we be certain that our sins are forgiven? Have we not all to appear before the judgment-seat hereafter?*"

In reply to these questions, first let me ask you, whether it is presumption for a sinner to believe what God says? or, whether it is not the height of presumption to disbelieve His

word? The Lord Jesus, in John v. 24, speaks thus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Observe: the Lord himself, who is to be the Judge, (for a little before He says, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son,") here pronounces sentence with the authority of one speaking from the everlasting throne of God, and declares, with a double Amen, "*Verily, verily*, I say unto you, He that heareth and believeth *hath* (not shall have, but *hath*) everlasting life;" has it already; has it at once, as soon as he believes. "Shall not come into condemna-

tion," that is, shall not stand to be judged upon any question of salvation, but is actually passed already from death unto life;—in fact *has been* translated out of death and the power of Satan, into the kingdom of life, of Christ, and of glory, just as certainly as Enoch and Elijah were translated or carried away from the earth into heaven.

Again: in John vi. 40, the Lord says, "This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day;" and in verse 54, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life."

Passages similar to these might be multiplied, proving that he that hath the Son hath life; that

as soon as a sinner believes, he has at once and for ever become a new creature, and can never perish, but is in fact everlastingly saved; for by grace we *are* saved, through faith—not we *shall* be. .

As to the forgiveness of sins, it is also stated in God's Word, that in His dear Son "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."* "You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses."† "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."‡

Forgiveness of sins, therefore, is a *present* blessing, to be received now, and not to be settled

* Col. i. 14. † Col. ii. 13. ‡ Eph. i. 7.

at some future judgment-scene. This forgiveness of sins, also, is true to every one that believes, on to the last moment of his life here below. He can say, every day, every hour, In Christ I have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: not I have had, but I *have* forgiveness of sins: not I shall have, but I *have* forgiveness of sins. The value of the precious blood of Christ goes on and on, cleansing and keeping us clean, till we are presented faultless, on the morning of the resurrection, before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy.

But it may be asked, "Is there no judgment-seat before which I shall have to stand?" If you are a believer in Christ, you will never have to appear before a throne of judgment upon any

question of *salvation*. On the contrary, supposing you were to die, you would depart to be with Christ, which is far better. You would be absent from the body, at home with the Lord. The dying thief heard the gracious words, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It would indeed be a strange thing if a believer, after having been at home with Christ above, after having been with Him in Paradise, should, at the resurrection-day, stand before a throne of judgment upon the question whether he were saved or not—should stand to hear whether he should go to heaven or to hell, after he had been with Christ in heaven for many years.

When the resurrection-day comes, "the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout,

with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ [those believers who have died] will rise first: then we which are alive and remain [those of us who are believers in Christ, who may be at that time living on the earth] shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* Thus, instead of being judged, “we shall ever be with the Lord.” The change also is instantaneous; “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” this mortal will put on immortality, this body of dishonour will be changed, or raised in glory. The believer will be glorified immediately he hears the trumpet sound at the Lord’s return. He cannot, then, be judged

* 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

on a question of sin, after he has been glorified and made like Christ.

Again, the Lord himself said, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also." He will take us to be for ever with himself, instead of calling us up before a throne of judgment.

There is indeed one passage which may perplex some: "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad."* This passage has no reference to any question of heaven or hell—any question of salvation or condemnation. It is the judgment-seat; or, as it might be better translated, *tribunal* of Christ,

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

which is here spoken of. Christ is the name of the Lord Jesus with reference to His Church. He will not, as Christ, sit upon a throne of judgment, to judge the world or the wicked; but, because He is *the Son of Man*, God has committed all judgment to Him.*

“God has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world by that *Man* whom He hath ordained.”† “Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”‡

Christ, because He is the head of His Church, will call around Him all believers, after they are raised and glorified, and will investigate their *works* and *ways* as believers, and will apportion power and dominion to them,

* John v. 27.

† Acts xvii. 31.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 64; see also Dan. vii. 13.

according to their past faithfulness and diligence. To this the apostle refers, when he speaks of all believers appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive according to their works. Lot was saved out of Sodom, and perished not in the burning city; but he was saved like one who had passed through the fire. He lost everything he had. He was as *safe* as Abraham; but the latter retained all his possessions, and glorified God in his walk of faith.

One believer is just as much saved as another from all condemnation; but the walk and conduct of one may be much more pleasing to Christ than the ways of another, and this difference will be made manifest after both have been raised in equal glory.

§ 14. (7.) “*I hope God will have mercy upon me: I hope I shall be saved at last: I am earnestly praying for it.*”

There is no passage of Scripture which authorizes any sinner to *hope* to be saved, or to *hope* that God will have mercy on him at some future time. God, in His wonderful love, sends the message of present salvation to the sinner now. He bids the thirsty come at once, and drink. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.”* “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”† “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”‡ I may claim Christ now at once as my salvation. I may trust now in the present mercy and grace of God; but I have no right to *hope*

* Isa. lv. 1. † Rev. xxii. 17. ‡ John vii. 37.

for it *to-morrow*. *Now* is the time of acceptance: *now* is the day of salvation. Thousands have gone to perdition, because they have *hoped* to be saved, and have not trusted Christ at once.

God has provided all things. "All things are ready:" mercy, love, pardon, peace, salvation, all ready; and God sends forth the invitation, "Come, partake." Do not stop to ask for things that God freely offers. Do not think that you are more ready to receive mercy than God is to give it. Indeed, one blessed aspect of the gospel is this—that God himself takes the place of beseeching the sinner; for He does it through His servants. He did it when Christ was on earth. He besought sinners to be reconciled to Him. And now that Christ is gone, He still continues to pray,

through the mouths of His ambassadors, "Be ye reconciled to God." God's favour needs not, therefore, to be entreated, as if His heart were hard, and as if His mercy were shut up. He has, in the gift of His blessed Son in death, proclaimed His mercy far and wide, and made manifest His love towards a guilty world; and now He invites sinners to cast away their hatred and mistrust, and freely to receive reconciliation.

There is one text of Scripture which is sometimes quoted as if to prove that we are told to hope for salvation:* "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a

* Rom. viii. 23-25.

man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

This passage has nothing to do with the salvation of a sinner from wrath or from hell, but simply refers to the resurrection of the body. Believers groan, because they are still in unredeemed bodies; but they groan in hope, and patiently wait for the time when these vile bodies shall be changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. We *are* already saved, says the apostle; but we hope for the glorious resurrection. Our salvation, as regards the *body*, is still a *hope*. As regards the *remission of sins*, "by grace we *are* saved through faith." We already receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. To be saved

in the way of hope, as regards the redemption of the body, is a very different thing from *hoping to be saved*, as regards the forgiveness of sins.

§ 15. (8.) "*But must I not strive? I am doing all I can.*"

Let us look into the Scripture, where the word *strive* is used. "Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say,

We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.”*

Two things are to be observed. First, the Lord gives this direction, *Strive*, in reply to a question, “Are there few that be saved?” and next, it is an *open*, though a *narrow* gate, that is to be entered. If a person occupy himself about doubtful or unprofitable questions, such as, whether there are few or many saved,—whether such a one is chosen of God to salvation,—the reply to such a one is, Take good care that you get in yourself. Be in earnest as regards your own salvation, and let not useless discussions and surmises beguile

* Luke xiii. 23-27.

you from making sure of the mercy of God.

It is a very common practice for a person, when he is spoken to about his own soul's welfare, to ask some question about a difficult text of Scripture, or to present some cavil or opposition, and, in wilful indifference, to cast himself upon the truth respecting God's election; perverting this blessed doctrine, by saying, "You know, I cannot be saved, unless I am elected." These are subtle devices and temptations of the evil one, encouraging the natural dislike of man's heart to God, and to the truth, and thereby fastening the wretched sinner in his determined unbelief and indifference.

To such, the answer of the Lord is very plain and solemn: "Strive to enter in at the strait

gate." The gate is open now; you have not to push it open: you are exhorted to enter it by Christ himself. God presents no hindrances. On the contrary, the door is flung wide open. The day will come when the door will be shut. *Then* you will gladly use every effort to have it open, and to get in; but it will be too late. You will plead in vain your religious services, your past prayers, your church-membership, your sitting under gospel truth, your regular attendance upon the means of grace, the sacrament, and the like. The Lord will say, "I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. You have kept outside the gate: you have been contented with certain religious forms and discussions about truth; and you have not made it a personal

matter, making it certain that you have entered in." These words will never be spoken to a person that is in earnest, or to a soul burdened with sin.

But what is the difficulty as regards entering in? for the gate is open, and yet the Lord says, *Strive*. The gate, though open, is *narrow*; and in this really lies the difficulty. Men want to get in, carrying with them their own self-conceit, their own self-righteousness, their own works, their own goodness, their religious forms and ceremonies, the correct performance of their duties. All these bundles and weights of self-will and self-righteousness make them too big to pass through the narrow gate. And again, there are many pulls backward from the world. The desire of gain; the desire of human applause;

the hope of keeping all that can be got in this world, and getting the next besides; the desire to retain some cherished lust—some earthly friendship: these are like so many cords keeping back the sinner, so that the Lord well says, “Strive to enter in.”

There *must* be a struggle with self. There *must* be a stern resolution, with the help of God, to take the kingdom of God by violence. To enter the gate, one must be stripped naked of all self-complacency, and one must count it worth while to be saved at any cost. So that, to do all one can, is really to be doing nothing; to have no confidence in the flesh, but to trust *the love of God* in Christ Jesus, and to take salvation as it is freely offered, counting it worth having.

§ 16. (9.) *Texts such as—"Many are called, but few chosen,"—"No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him,"—and others of a similar character, sometimes perplex the troubled conscience: and the heart turns in upon itself, asking, Am I one of the chosen ones?*

Observe: the Lord Jesus never uttered words of this kind to any trembling self-convicted sinner. But when He was met by opposition, by cavilling questions, and by rejection, then He spoke of the Father drawing the sinner to Him, and the like. If there be a true conviction of sin, whence does that come? Would Satan teach a sinner to be unhappy because of sins? Is it not the purpose of the devil to *destroy* the soul—to murder? and is not

his most effectual mode of doing so, keeping the conscience lulled to rest,—comforting the heart with a false peace,—telling the sinner that he is not so bad,—that he is moral, religious, upright, and that God is merciful,—and if he does his duty, all will be well; that it is excitement or madness to talk so much, and think so much, about Christ and salvation; and that it unfits a man for his proper duties in life, and for his proper place in society?

These are some of the devil's sops, to lull the poor deluded soul into a false security. But where God draws, He draws to Christ—to Christ crucified. He, by the Holy Spirit, makes the sinner conscious of his need of a Saviour. And, as soon as this is felt, let the heart rejoice: for God

is dealing, and will not leave the soul without accomplishing His blessed work of salvation. Only let the troubled soul say, I am the clay, Thou art the potter. Let him commit himself in helplessness to the love and mercy of God; and *all is done*. If I wish to know whether I am elect of God, let me ask myself the question, Am I lost? Do I really believe that I am utterly and entirely lost? If so, I may be quite assured that Christ Jesus was sent by God to seek and to save me; that He died for me on the cross.

§ 17. (10.) “*Must I not work for my salvation? for does not the Bible say, ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling?’*”

Let us look at the whole pas-

sage as it occurs in Phil. ii. 12, 13: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." The apostle Paul was writing to persons already saved. He calls them his beloved ones; and in the first verse of the same epistle he addresses them as "saints in Christ Jesus." No one can be a saint, or holy one, in Christ Jesus, who is *not* saved. A saint is exactly the opposite of an unsaved sinner; and you, my reader, are either a saved sinner, and therefore a saint washed in the precious blood of Christ, or a lost sinner, still unsaved.

These Philippians, having been

truly converted to God, had, during the apostle's stay with them, been obedient to his directions, and had, in their conduct and walk, very plainly shewn themselves to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that the apostle had left them, he tells them in his letter to shew out their salvation much more manifestly in his absence. People seem to read this passage as if the apostle had said, "*Work for* your salvation;" whereas the word is, "*Work out,*"—shew out your salvation in every action of your life. Let the mind and ways of Christ be seen in all your occupations, pursuits, and intercourse one with another.

Supposing I were to take beautiful colours, such as blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen, and also to present a very choice pattern,

already worked out in canvas, to my child, and say to her, "Here are the materials. Here are all the various shades of colour that you see in that pattern. Now work them out yourself on another piece of canvas, and copy exactly the beautiful pattern before you." This would not be directing my child to labour or work *for* the materials; but, having all the materials given her, it would be expressing my wish that she should carefully copy the pattern before her.

This is a little illustration of what is intended in the above-quoted text. The believer has received, out of the fulness of Christ, grace corresponding to every grace in Him; and the perfect example is also before him. He is therefore to endeavour, by the help of God, to dis-

play the graces of the Lord Jesus in his own life and conduct. Salvation implies the whole blessed standing of the believer, not only his deliverance from wrath and condemnation, but his new creation, his completeness in Christ, his power, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to glorify God in his body and in his spirit, which are the Lord's. Costly gifts have been bestowed upon him. Salvation has been procured for him at a wondrous price, and therefore, "with fear and trembling," he is to make it manifest, lest he should appear to soil or defile any of the glorious things committed to him. And yet, at the same time, it is God himself that is working in him, to will and to do of His good pleasure.

§ 18. (11.) "*After all, may I not fall from grace, and perish?*"

Perhaps there is no expression in Scripture so misunderstood and misapplied as this one, "falling from grace." If we turn to the Epistle to the Galatians, where alone it occurs, we shall at once perceive the true meaning of the term. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."*

These Gentile converts in Galatia had been drawn aside by some Judaizing teachers, who told them that justification by faith was not enough, but that some works, or rites and ceremonies, must be added on, in order to secure salvation. The apostle, in his epistle, pronounced a curse upon any that brought such a gospel, which was not really the Gospel, but a perver-

* Gal. v. 4.

sion of the truth. And after proving that a sinner is completely justified through the mercy of God, by faith in Jesus alone, he proceeds to declare that Christ is of no value to any one that seeks to be justified by the law or by works, and that such a one who thus thinks, by works or ordinances of any kind, to be justified or made righteous before God, has fallen from the only true ground of justification; viz., the mercy or grace of God.

Thus, to fall from grace means to become confident in our own goodness, or to place dependence on our own works. It does not mean, as some think, falling into open sin. Of this the same epistle treats, and directs that if any one be overtaken by temptation, so as to commit some open fault or sin, his brethren in Christ

should seek to restore him again in the spirit of meekness. Such a one has not fallen from grace; for it is through the very grace of God that he is to be restored. He is to remember that the mercy of God is still towards him in Christ Jesus, and that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.

But if a person trusts in his own works, he ceases to rely on the mercy of God, and he falls away from confiding in that grace which alone can uphold and sustain him. Grace means the full, unmerited, undeserved love and favour of God; so that if you, dear reader, continue conscious of your own unworthiness and weakness, you will not fall from grace, for you will still trust alone to the mercy, pity, and love of God.

A FEW WORDS TO BACKSLIDERS.

No one can have watched the effect of the Gospel at the present day, preached as it is with so much earnestness and simplicity by many servants of God, without being struck with the number of cases of restoration, as well as of conversion which occur. The same precious truth of the full and free love of God, manifested in the gift of His blessed Son, meets the unsaved sinner in the midst of *all* his sins, and through the power of the Holy Ghost saves him, and also meets the wandering believer, and brings him back to peace and rest of soul. How is it that there are so many backsliders—believers who

once had rest in Christ, who once knew their sins forgiven, but who have lost this blessed confidence, doubt their salvation, and even question whether they were ever converted?

One reason of this is, that many true-hearted, saved sinners have never entirely trusted in the word of God, but have been contented with inward feelings of peace, without implicitly relying upon what God says, as the alone sure foundation of faith. The first burst of joy, in the consciousness of happy deliverance, passes away; the world, and temptations of various kinds, come in; and the weak believer finds himself drawn aside by some old habit of evil, or some unexpected power of Satan; and, not having trusted in the word of God, the prop on which he rests fails, and he begins

to doubt his own love to God, and then to doubt the love of God towards him; and thus he sinks lower and lower, till he takes his place among the unregenerate around him, as if he were one of them.

Peter had true and deep affection for Christ, and trusted in this *his* love for his Lord, instead of mistrusting himself, and instead of hearkening to the gracious words of Jesus, warning him against his own self-confidence. The Lord saw what would happen, and prayed for Peter, that his faith might not fail, even though he would fall so low as to curse and swear, and thrice deny his Master and his Saviour. And Peter's *faith* did not fail, though he lamentably failed as regards his *conduct*.

Satan first tempted Peter to

deny his Lord, and then whispered into his heart, "Now you cannot expect that Christ loves you any more. You have behaved so abominably to Him, that it would be shameful arrogance in you to think that He can any more look upon you in love and grace." Thus Satan desired, if possible, to separate Christ and Peter, and perhaps to hurry Peter on to the same miserable end as that of Judas. But the Lord had foreseen this sifting of the devil, and through his intercession sustained Peter's faith. When, therefore, He turned and looked on him, the poor fallen disciple at once recognized the unchanged love of that gaze, remembered the words which the Lord had spoken, went out and wept bitterly, and never for a moment questioned that Jesus loved him

as much as ever, and that he was still saved by grace. He was the first, therefore, to run to the tomb after the resurrection, and he was the first to leap into the sea, in order to reach his Lord.

Therefore, trembling believing sinner, distrust not the grace of Christ; and, oh! do not think that He is changed as to His wondrous love for you, because you have proved faithless, and have turned back from Him! "If we believe not [that is, if we prove faithless as to our conduct], He abideth faithful: He cannot deny himself."* He may deny *us*; that is, He may deny that we are following Him as we ought, or that we are worthy to be called His disciples. But, blessed be His name, He cannot deny himself. He cannot restrain His own won-

* 2 Tim. ii. 13.

drous love, or deny that His name is JESUS, SAVIOUR. Our salvation depends on His unalterable mercy, on the infinite preciousness and value of His death, and not on the measure of *our* faithfulness or obedience. The very best of us hourly fail and sin; but He saves to the very end. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

II. Many believers, from the first, are not fully established in the truth. They have not heard a clear, simple gospel. They have been taught that salvation is a matter of progress; and they have received a testimony in which faith and works are mingled together; and the consequence has been, that their souls have not rested entirely on Christ and His work alone. No wonder, therefore, that their walk is feeble, and

that they turn aside and question their “interest in Christ,”—to use a familiar expression on the subject.

If this little treatise meets the eye of any such, let me beseech him to consider the vastness of the gift that God has bestowed in not sparing His own Son. Let him contemplate more steadfastly the death of Jesus, and see how in that sacrifice, and in *that alone*, there is complete remission of sins. Perfect pardon and peace must first be received by the sinner, before he will ever be able to obey or serve God in any way as he ought. His obedience must be the *result* of his confidence in God’s mercy and love, and in the salvation accomplished by Christ. He must not judge of his salvation by his own walk or conduct; but he should seek to make his

life a manifestation of the salvation he has already received. A feeble appreciation of Christ, and a consequent uncertainty about one's own safety, will always produce a halting, doubting, uneven walk.

III. There is much confusion in the minds of some with respect to the new birth. It is thought that the effect of faith in Christ is to produce a gradual improvement; so that evil is slowly eradicated, and the believer becomes more and more holy, and more and more fit for heaven. When, therefore, a believer who has received these opinions finds that the motions of sin, and temptations to evil, are still present with him, he very naturally becomes disheartened and discouraged, and begins to question his salvation.

But the truth is, that there exists, to the very end of our life here below, "the old man," the evil heart, called "the flesh," which remains unchanged, and ready to break out at any moment, in thought or deed, as bad and as corrupt as ever; while at the same time there is "the new man"—that which is born of the Spirit, and is therefore spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," It continues unchanged in its evil nature; while that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

The struggle between flesh and spirit will continue to the end. Be not, therefore, cast down because you still find the presence of evil within you: but be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Be strong in the assurance of His wondrous love and power

on your behalf. Cast away doubts and uncertainties, because they are dishonouring to Him, and weakening to yourself. Meet every whisper of Satan, who tries to discourage you, by the fact that Christ has died, and is risen again: and make the consciousness of your own infirmity and sinfulness the very ground of firmer trust in the precious blood of Christ. Weakness and worthlessness are the very best pleas we can put forth for the goodness, and mercy, and power of God.

Let me now press upon the reader the one truth which has been prominent throughout these pages; viz., that full and eternal justification is at once the blessed portion of every one who trusts in the death of Christ. There was safety to Israel when destruc-

tion was all around them, because the blood of the lamb was upon their door-posts. God saw, in that mere shadow, such a type of His own Son's death, that¹ He gave *perfect security* to every one who put himself within the shelter of that blood. Shall not, then, Christ's own blood be infinitely precious? Shall it not accomplish *entire* and eternal safety? Make that death your refuge; hide yourself in that safe covert; trust in JESUS, confide in HIM, make His Cross to be the place where you see your sins borne away for ever: and, notwithstanding all you *feel*, eternal life, eternal glory, are yours now and evermore.

Finally: Having thus briefly attempted to meet certain difficulties, that frequently hinder the

peace of troubled hearts, let me earnestly beseech my reader more carefully and diligently to peruse the word of God; to ask himself, as he reads sentence by sentence, What does this mean? and to ask God to help him to understand what it means. Let him deal with it as the word of God—as if he heard the voice of JEHOVAH speaking directly to him from heaven.

If Jesus were on earth, would you not, dear reader, go to Him? would you not ask Him to save you? would you not believe His word, if He said to you, “Thy sins are forgiven thee: thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace”? Thus He speaks to you out of the Bible. Hear His voice. Believe what He says. Command away every doubt and uncertainty, by the authoritative voice of

the mighty Saviour. He is now at the right hand of God; but still He speaks—speaks from heaven—speaks in the living Word, the Scriptures of truth. And why is He exalted to the throne of the majesty in the heavens? In order to be a Prince and a Saviour—to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. His name, JESUS, given to Him at His birth, and again given to Him by God in resurrection, proclaims the blessed truth, that salvation is IN HIM. Faith in that name is sufficient.

Two gentlemen were lately conversing together upon this momentous subject. One said to the other, after pointing out to him the mighty work accomplished by Christ on the cross, “Do you need any thing more?” The other replied, “Yes, I think

I do. I think I must have some work of my own." His friend answered, "Jesus, at the right hand of God, is *my* title, and my only title, to salvation. Here are pen, ink, and paper: now write me down a better."

The truth is, that Christ in glory is the proof of the complete and all-sufficient value of His death. If a friend becomes surety for me, and is thrown into prison because of my debt, and I afterwards meet that friend walking at liberty, I am sure he must have made satisfaction to the full for my debt, otherwise he could not be out of prison. So the Lord, at the right hand of power on high, is a proof that HE has answered to the full every demand of God against me a sinner. His death is everything or nothing. It is either the entire

blotting out and cancelling of every charge that can be made against me by a holy, righteous, and all-seeing God, or it avails me nothing.

It is said of John Bunyan, that he was walking one day in a field, under great trouble of soul at the discovery of his own vileness, and not knowing how to be justified with God, when he heard, as he imagined, a voice saying to him, "Your righteousness is in heaven." He went into his house, and took his Bible, thinking there to find the very words which had thus sounded in his heart. He did not discover the identical expression; but many a passage of Scripture proclaimed the same truth, and showed him that Jesus, at the right hand of God, is complete righteousness to every one that believeth.

May the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, use the truth contained in these pages to the peace and comfort of every troubled soul who may peruse them, and pardon the insufficiency and weakness of the statements. To Him be all the glory.

“Unto Him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

“Behold, He cometh with clouds: and every eye shall see Him.”

“The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is

athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”



FAITH.

FAITH is a very simple thing,
Though little understood ; 1 Cor. ii. 14.
It frees the soul from death's dread sting,
By RESTING in the blood. Ex. xii. 13, 23.

It looks not on the things around,
Nor on the things WITHIN ; Jer. xvii. 9.
It takes its flight to scenes above,
Beyond the sphere of sin. Heb. i. 3.

It sees upon the throne of God,
A Victim that was slain ; Heb. x. 12, 14.
It rests its ALL on His shed blood,
And says, "I'm born again." 2 Cor. v. 15, 17.

Faith is not what we FEEL or see,
It is a simple TRUST 1 John i. 9.
In what the God of love has said
Of Jesus, as "the Just." 1 Peter iii. 18.

The PERFECT ONE that died for me,
Upon His Father's throne, Rev. iii. 21.
Presents our names before our God,
And pleads HIMSELF alone. Heb. iv. 14, 15.

What Jesus is, and that alone,
 Is faith's delightful plea; Eph. i. 6, 7.
 It never deals with SINFUL self,
 Nor RIGHTEOUS self, IN ME. Rom. vii. 18.

It tells me I am counted "DEAD"
 By God, in His own word; Rom. vi. 6, 7.
 It tells me I am "BORN AGAIN"
 In Christ, my RISEN Lord. Rom. vi. 4, 5.

In that He died, He died to SIN;
 In that HE lives—to God; Rom. vi. 10.
 Then I am dead to NATURE'S hopes,
 And justified through blood. Rom. iii. 24, 25.

If He is free, then I am free,
 From all unrighteousness; 1 John iii. 5-7.
 If He is just, then I am just,
 HE is MY righteousness. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31;
 2 Cor. v. 21.

What want I more to perfect bliss?
 A body like HIS OWN Phil. iii. 20, 21.
 Will perfect me for greater joys,
 Than angels round the throne. Eph. i. 17-23.
 E. B.

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